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Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance, follow-up and implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action

Written statement* submitted by International Youth and Student Movement for the United Nations, a non-governmental organization in general consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[18 February 2014]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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Afrophobia*

In its resolution 21/33 adopted on 28 September 2012 the Human Rights Council deplored " the special form of discrimination faced by people of African descent known as 'Afrophobia'".

The active use by the Human Rights Council of the term afrophobia was in response to the recommendations of the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent at its previous sessions. In the report of the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent from its twelfth session adopted on 26 April 2013 the Working Group affirmed that "The recognition by the Human Rights Council in its resolution 21/33 of the term "Afrophobia", as had been recommended by the Working Group, requires an active and systematic follow-up in order to assure the full implementation of this important assertion of the special and unique form of discrimination faced by people of African descent and assuring its equal use with analogous terms that are used to address the stigmatization and prejudice against ethnic, religious and other vulnerable groups."

However one group of countries, the European Union, has regularly objected to the introduction of the term "afrophobia" both in negotiations on resolutions and in statements at the Council. In its statement to the Human Rights Council on 27 September 2011 the EU stated that "establishing a hierarchy of those affected by racial discrimination is not acceptable. Therefore the EU rejects the introduction of potentially harmful terminology as "afrophobia".

In the context of the above it should be noted that the" afrophobia" term has gained an increased use in European countries and also been included in government ordinances relating to work against discrimination in one EU country, Sweden, without "harmful" consequences. The term is for example actively used by the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention and recently the Swedish Minister for Integration commissioned the Multicultural Centre to conduct a systematic review of the current situation on afrophobia experienced by Swedes of African descent and which report was presented on February 3, 2014. The report indicated that afrophobia, discrimination against persons of African descent, is widespread and a problem in Sweden and will hopefully help the government to better address the situation. This demonstrates the importance of this form of recognition of discrimination against people of African descent.

Anti-black racism targeted against people of African descent was the first form of discrimination to be given a name when the term "negrophobia" was introduced in the United States in the 1830:ties and used in the campaigns against slavery and for racial equality. "Negrophobia" for example predated the appearance of "anti-Semitism" term by many decades. Afrophobia is only a modernized form of the older outdated term.

In the United Nations the "negrophobia" term was first included in the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance to "examine according to his mandate incidents of contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, any form of discrimination against Blacks, Arabs and Muslims, xenophobia, negrophobia, anti-Semitism, and related intolerance" as adopted by the Commission on Human Rights at its fiftieth session in 1994. The "negrophobia" term disappeared in connection with the World Conference Against Racism and its early follow up for the only reason that any term including "negro" had become totally outdated and unacceptable, in particular in the English language. While the replacement of "negrophobia" with afrophobia was discussed in that connection, it did not take place and therefore deprived people of African descent the recognition it had previously had in listings of existing forms of discrimination. It is therefore a timely measure that the Human Rights Council and the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent has taken to reintroduce this recognition of the special and unique form of discrimination that people of African descent face.

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*The World Against Racism Network (WARN) also share the views expressed in this statement.